

to keep our economy going by meeting our responsibilities to deal with the global economic challenges.

This is a very, very good day for America. And I thank all the people behind me for everything they did to bring it about.

Thank you.

Legislative Agenda for Education

Q. Mr. President, you rattled off a list of many of your priorities which this Congress did not give you, priorities from your State of the Union Address. Why did you—and all of you, perhaps—specifically decide to hold the line on the education issue, on the idea of more funding for education, et cetera? Did you think that would have the most resonance with the voters?

The President. Well, no, it's what we believed in. We got the entire education program except for three things. First of all, the huge funding increases for education. But they were properly targeted. This 100,000 teachers—this is truly historic. The United States—this is the educational equivalent of what we did when we put 100,000 police on the street. And I will remind you that we now have the lowest crime rate in 25 years. We have never done that before. And we had the same partisan argument then. We were told that it wouldn't work, that it was interference in local government, even though all the police chiefs of the country were screaming, "Give it to us." Now we were told the same thing here.

This is an historic commitment by the United States to put 100,000 teachers out there for smaller classes in the early grades. That, plus the historic commitment we made to after-school and summer school programs, plus the continued funding to hook up all the classrooms to the Internet by the year 2000—these things are truly historic.

Now, I wish we had been able to persuade the Republican majority to give us the school construction and rehabilitation proposal because we need modern facilities, and that proposal is a paid-for-tax cut in the balanced budget that would enable us to build or rehabilitate 5,000 schools. I think that's important. I still think we ought to be a nation which says we should have high standards, and I wish we had had an explicit proposal

on that. And I believe in the empowerment educational opportunity zones to reward schools that end social promotion and fund more after-school and summer school programs.

Now, those are three things that I would like to have. But we can debate those and work for those in the election. We have differences of opinions, and they have more Members than we do. They're against the Patients' Bill of Rights, and we're for it. They were against reforming—passing the tobacco reform legislation and against the campaign finance reform. But when you compare where we were for 8 months with where we are today, and how good this is for America, that the things that I talked about in the State of the Union in education, in the environment, in the international economy, and saving Social Security, these are huge victories for the American people.

We did the best we could, and I think the best we did by staying together was very good, indeed. And I think the American people will believe so, too.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at the Plenary Session of the Wye River Conference on the Middle East at Wye Mills, Maryland October 15, 1998

I wish to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Arafat, and the members of the Israeli and Palestinian delegations here. As I said earlier today at the White House, there is hard work ahead if we are to reach an agreement here and get the peace process moving again. Secretary Albright and I and our entire team are ready to do whatever we can.

As the press contingent prepares to leave, let me say that all of us are determined to keep our energies focused on the talks themselves. Therefore, we have agreed to confine our dealings with the media on this subject to periodic briefings to be conducted by spokespersons. We have a lot of work to do, a limited amount of time to do it in, but we're ready to get to work.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:07 p.m. in the Main Conference Room at the Wye River Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Proclamation 7140—White Cane Safety Day, 1998

October 15, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The white cane is both a simple tool and a powerful symbol. For people who are blind or visually impaired, it can be the key to greater mobility, giving them information about their surroundings and allowing them to travel safely whether crossing the street or crossing the country. For those who are sighted, the white cane shows that blind or visually impaired people have the ability, the desire, and the right to participate in every aspect of our national life. It is also a reminder that, whether as pedestrians or drivers, we should respond with care and courtesy to people using a white cane. And for all of us, the white cane symbolizes the independence every citizen needs and deserves if he or she is to contribute fully to society.

Our annual observance of White Cane Safety Day gives us the opportunity not only to celebrate the accomplishments of those who use the white cane, but also to renew our commitment to removing those barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that prevent people with disabilities from reaching their full potential. Since passage of the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Fair Housing Amendments Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Telecommunications Act, we have made great progress in our efforts to ensure that all people with disabilities enjoy equal access to employment opportunities, education, public accommodations, housing, transportation, telecommunications, emerging technologies, and other aspects of our society.

We still have a long way to go, however, before we achieve the full inclusion, empowerment, and independence of all Americans with disabilities. The public and private sectors must work in partnership to raise awareness of the rights protected by the ADA and other laws, as well as the responsibilities and obligations these laws mandate. It is crucial that we pursue a comprehensive strategy to enable people with all types of disabilities to obtain and sustain competitive employment in our Nation's thriving economy. Men and women with disabilities have much to offer, and their energy, creativity, and hard work can greatly strengthen our Nation and our economy. As we observe White Cane Safety Day and acknowledge the importance of the white cane as an instrument of personal freedom, let us reaffirm our determination to ensure equal opportunity for every American, including people who are blind or visually impaired.

To honor the many achievements of blind and visually impaired citizens and to recognize the white cane's significance in advancing independence, the Congress, by joint resolution approved October 6, 1964, has designated October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 15, 1998, as White Cane Safety Day. I call upon the people of the United States, government officials, educators, and business leaders to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 20.